

The District 3 Slate

September 2005

County Supervisor Pam Slater-Price

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Pam Slater-Price

The effort to curb childhood obesity is at the forefront where it belongs. As a society, we must change the destructive nutritional habits that threaten to overwhelm our health-care system.

There is good news to report on the war on obesity. I have highlighted several of these on Page 2 of this Slater Slate.

Now I want to draw attention to a way to get your child "stepping" in the right direction. Sept. 28 is America on the Move Day of Action. Promoters ask that you walk - yes, walk! - your child to school.

The goal of the day is to get you to add 2,000 steps to your day. You can learn more about this healthy event at www.americaonthemove.org.

This is just one way to walk away from a sedentary lifestyle. You'll be glad you did it.

Pam

Terminating Gridlock Is Up To All San Diegans

One group that understands the challenges we face in San Diego County is the Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS), an international organization that has 35 chapters representing more than 3,400 professionals. Founded in 1977, WTS seeks to advance both the transportation industry and the role of women in this field.

I addressed the San Diego chapter earlier this month, updating members on the progress made to improve transit in this region as well as the frustrations we continue to face. My message was direct: Government alone cannot solve this region's traffic problems. Until employers adopt staggered work hours, coordinate to keep delivery trucks off freeways during peak hours, and actively promote ride sharing, San Diego County will have a difficult time making a significant dent in ending gridlock.

It was this message that I delivered to more than 90 major employers who attended my "Business Partnerships for Traffic Solutions" summit held last April. I firmly believe that one entity - government, the private sector, individual drivers - cannot solve the growing use of our roads and freeways. Since the 1980s, vehicle trips per freeway lane increased by 105 percent, vs. just 17 percent for increased freeway capacity. It is physically impossible to solve this problem by just adding to our current freeway system.

Each day, almost 1 million drive to work in this county. Fifty thousand people commute from Tijuana; another 30,000 commute from Temecula and south Riverside County.

It will take innovation, cooperation and determination to get traffic flowing again.

Since 1984, the county has provided almost \$30 million in Transportation Demand Act funding for the planning, design and construction of 15 transit centers. These centers are in Oceanside, downtown Carlsbad, Encinitas, at Grossmont and Southwestern colleges, Santee and the County Center/Little Italy in downtown San Diego.

The county is doing its part. The 159 traffic signals in the unincorporated regions are being coordinated to facilitate traffic flow. Already, signals are improving road conditions in Fallbrook,

Lakeside and Casa de Oro.

As policy, San Diego County encourages that its leased facilities be on or near transit routes so employees can choose to use public transportation. Ten percent of the county's 17,000 employees use some form of public transit and vanpooling. Each department and agency has the flexibility to offer flex scheduling and telecommuting for its staff members.

I am proud of my office's leadership in this



issue. Of my nine staff members, one commutes to the office on the Coaster, another uses the Express Bus, and one uses the Trolley. Two carpool (including one who drives a hybrid) and another telecommutes part-time. I drive a hybrid and our office pool vehicle is also a hybrid.

Not every office or business has the flexibility that accommodates its employees. But businesses need to better embrace flex scheduling and non-rush hour start/end times if they expect to retain and attract quality employees. Nobody wants to spend needless hours crawling along in congested traffic.

Working collaboratively, we can reduce the gridlock that adds stress to our lives and diminishes the productivity necessary to keep San Diego County a global leader. I have the confidence we can do it. So do the members of WTS who are planning our future.

New Effort Focuses On Curbing Child Obesity

Health, education and governmental officials are finally getting the message out that childhood obesity is a major medical problem. Study after study finds that one in three teen-age girls are either overweight or obese, and a primary reason is the junk food rich in fat and sugar that dominates their diets.

One of my goals as chairwoman of the Board of Supervisors this year is to bring attention to this health crisis. It affects all of us through increased insurance premiums, higher hospital costs and additional strain on expenses for health and human services.

In March, I hosted the first-ever School Food Summit that brought together more than 250 educators, school nutritionists, public health specialists and others concerned about this growing crisis.

Since that conference we have learned even more irrefutable evidence. An August study by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research reveals that 9 percent - 300,000 kids - eat fast food **twice a day**, and more than 2 percent - 90,000 teens - eat fast food three or more times **daily**.

"Kids are just overloading on fat and sugar," admits study coauthor Theresa Haster. "It's become so pervasive."

Three trends revealed in the UCLA study clearly define this crisis:

- The prevalence of overweight children in California rose 6 percent during the past three years.
- Only one in four children eat the recommended five or more daily servings of fruits and vegetables.
- One in three teen-agers drink at least two cans of soda daily. The average is 1.4 glasses of soda consumed daily. Boys drink 25 percent more soda than girls, and Latino teens drink 50 percent more soda than their Caucasian counterparts.

Obese children have a greater risk of suffering asthma, according to a study published in the American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine. A study in the prestigious New England Journal of Medicine warns that today's obese child will shorten his or her life by two to five

years. "A Potential Decline in Life Expectancy In the United States in the 21st Century" cites obesity as a greater concern to public health than cancer or heart disease.

It concludes that two-thirds of adults are overweight, with one-third qualifying as obese. One in three children are overweight, a rate that has more than doubled in the past two decades. Childhood diabetes increased 10-fold.

Schools To Respond

We already see the impacts of this crisis. The California Health and Human Services Agency estimates obesity is costing this state almost \$29 billion annually in healthcare expenses, injuries and lost productivity - 32 percent more than just five years ago.

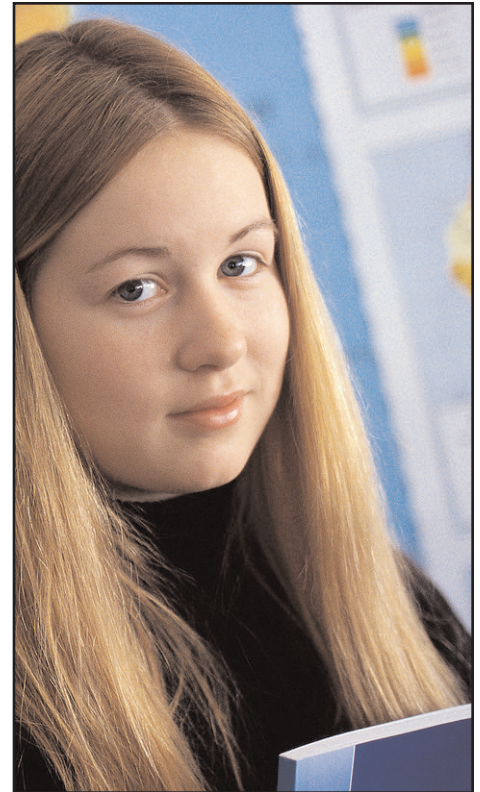
The Centers for Disease Control estimates the annual hospital costs to treat juvenile-obesity related illnesses to be \$127 million. The cost of treating 17 million diabetics in 2002 was \$132 billion; these numbers are predicted to climb to 50 million and **\$1 trillion** by 2027. Unless something is done to change these self-destructive habits, one in three children born today will develop Type 2 diabetes.

The California Legislature this session passed two bills that will make campuses healthier in the food and snacks they offer. Gone are Twinkies and Doritos and Pepsi; "in" are Gatorade and bottled water, granola and breakfast bars.

SB 12 and SB 965 set new regulations on fat and sugar content of items sold on campus during school hours. They also ban, beginning in 2007, soda from being sold on high school campuses. (Soda is already banned at middle and elementary schools.)

These were some of the solutions discussed during my School Food Summit. They are a start. But offering healthy food at school is of little benefit if a student stops off for a Big Mac and jumbo-sized fries after school. Proper nutrition needs to be stressed all day long, day in and day out.

Our society must re-emphasize physical education during the school day. Children need to be active and have fun. Parents,



unplug the Playstation, turn off the television (studies show obese children watch an additional one to two hours of TV each day vs. active children) and force your kids to get outside!

Starts With Breakfast

The importance of breakfast cannot be emphasized enough. Research done by the National Institute of Health on 2,400 girls nationwide over 10 years reveals that those who regularly eat breakfast enjoyed a lower average body mass index, a key indicator or obesity. (The study is in this month's Journal of the American Dietetic Association.)

"We think it kick-starts your metabolism because you've eaten something. When you get to lunch you're not starving and you can make reasonable choices for lunch and dinner," explains Bruce Barton, the study's author and president of the Maryland Medical research Institute.

"This is a train that won't be stopped. People have likened this to an anti-smoking campaign but it's not just about taking something away," explains Deborah Meeker of the state Department of Education's nutrition services division, one of the panelists at the School Food Summit. "There needs to be change in eating habits."

More Sand Is Solution For Bluff Failures

A long-awaited study has concluded what most San Diegans already know - the more sand on a beach the less risk there is of a catastrophic bluff failure.

The federal agency in charge of the nation's coastline, the Army Corps of Engineers, released its assessment late last month, signaling a hopeful start to a pilot shoreline renourishment project for the coastline between Solana Beach and Encinitas.

The 200-page report recommends placing upwards of 825,000 cubic yards of sand on a 1.5 mile section of Encinitas beach, from Swami's north to the 700 block of Neptune Avenue. Another 450,000 cubic yards will be deposited in Solana Beach, from its boundary with Del Mar north 1 mile to Fletcher Cove. These totals will bring us beaches ranging from 100 to 200 feet in width, which is what the shoreline was before the federal government altered sand flow by constructing the harbor at Camp Pendleton, followed by several devastating winters when El Nino storms denuded the beaches.

The study mirrors the recommendations offered during a conference I hosted last month ("The Wave of the Future: Shoreline Preservation Technologies & Strategies"). Coastal erosion is more than a nuisance of nature; it endangers our tourism industry (see Pam's Perspective, Page 4), impacts our quality-of-life, and degrades our environment.

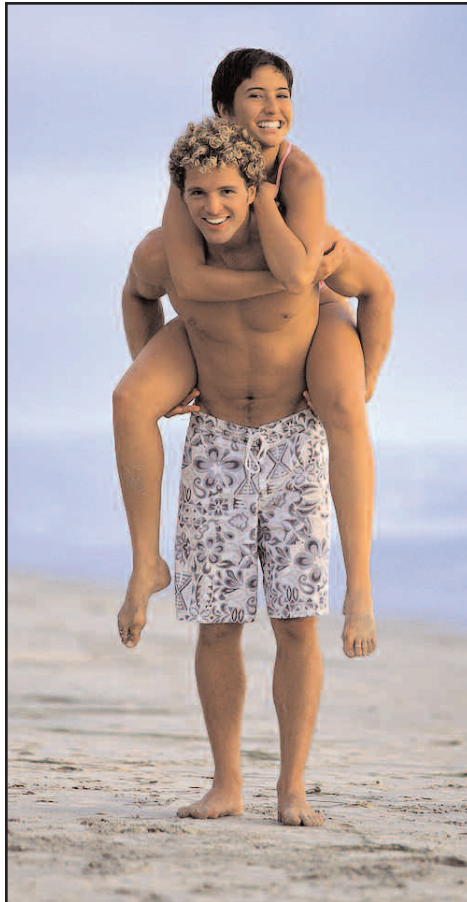
My involvement with coastal restoration began while I was serving on the Encinitas City Council, and continues during my tenure on the Board of Supervisors. This year I chair CalCoast, a statewide advocacy group, and have served as the county representative on SANDAG's Shoreline Erosion Committee since its inception.

'It is up to us to find the solutions to protect this resource that fulfills our recreational needs and restores a sense of balance necessary to our helter-skelter world.'

The reality is coastal erosion is avoidable if we are willing to make the commitment to protect and enhance our beaches. The Army Corps of Engineers recommends the restored section of North County shoreline be replenished every five years for 50 years, at a cost of about \$5 million per attempt. The federal government will pay for 50 percent of the renourishment, with local municipalities paying for the other half.

In the late 1990s, Encinitas voters took a proactive approach to that city's beach problems by passing Prop R, which dedicates a portion of the hotel room tax to beach revitalization efforts.

It is up to us to find the solutions to protect this resource that fulfills our recreational needs and restores a sense of balance necessary to our helter-skelter world.



A sandy beach helps prevent bluff erosion, reducing the necessity to build sea walls.

Non-Profits Can Profit From Grant Program

The County of San Diego wants a few good recommendations - and the best ideas may help your non-profit organization.

The Board of Supervisors will award up to five \$10,000 grants to institutions willing to work with a county department or agency to produce video programs that educate viewers across the county. The Community Partnership for Local Government Programming Video Grant Program helps non-profit groups,

community organizations and educational institutions produce half-hour videos.

Previous topics focused on disaster preparedness, volunteer search-and-rescue programs, responsible

pet ownership, exercise and health programs, and environmental stewardship. The videos must be suitable to air on the County Television Network (CTN) as well as Cox, Time Warner and Adelphia cable.

Application packets can be obtained one of four ways:

- Through the Internet by clicking on "grant program" at www.ctn.org.
- E-mailing your name and address to Jacquelyn.Collins@sdcounty.ca.gov.
- Writing to Cable Franchise Administrator, County of San Diego, 1600 Pacific Highway, Room 208, San Diego CA 92101.
- Calling (619) 595-4680.

Deadline to submit an application is 5 p.m. Nov. 14. Awards will be announced in March 2006.



PAM'S PERSPECTIVE

Tourism A Backbone Of San Diego Economy

Now that summer is over, have you ever wondered what San Diego County would be like without tourists? No visits to the Zoo, Sea World or the Wild Animal Park? No excursions to the beach, Julian, Palomar Mountain or the desert?

How about this answer: More than 138,000 people - our neighbors, friends and family members - would not be working today. The leisure industry is a key piston in the engine that drives San Diego County's economic engine. More than

27.5 million tourists are predicted to spend almost \$6 billion here this year, with the average daily rate for a motel room exceeding \$112.

While these numbers appear to be astronomical, they point out an unpopular trend - San Diego County is losing tourists to other regions that more aggressively promote their assets. About seven in 10 tourists use their vehicle to drive to San Diego County.

This county and its elected leaders cannot take this mobile leisure market for granted. Other



Healthy activities, such as golf and surfing, are two draws for tourists who appreciate San Diego County's active lifestyle.



regions are after this lucrative tourist dollars. Phoenix and Las Vegas are prime competitors, and tourism boards in Orange County (can you say Disneyland?) and San Francisco earmark incredible sums to market their attractions.

Representatives of the various chambers of commerce and tourism boards work hard to maintain our "brand" as the place to be to enjoy the healthy outdoor Southern California lifestyle. I help these non-profit organizations achieve their goals through specific community grants.

These grants enable organizations to coordinate marketing, host special events, and stage festivals and other activities that bring tourists to our county, where they spend dollars staying in our hotels, eating

in our restaurants, partaking of our cultural activities, and shopping in our plazas. Tax revenue returns to the community, which benefits us all. Libraries can be kept open longer, parks get new playground equipment and refurbished trails, and streets are quickly repaired.

How competitive is the battle for tourist dollars? California is about to launch a \$7.3 million campaign - "California: Find Yourself Here" - to protect and enhance its \$82.5 billion industry from intensive marketing by rival states, especially Hawaii, Illinois and Florida.

San Diego County will be included in this campaign. As chair of the Board of Supervisors, you have my pledge to do everything possible to keep our tourism piston humming along.

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